

i. Non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm

Non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm (*gzugs su nyer 'gro'i phyir mi 'ong*) are non-returners of the Desire Realm who in this life newly attained the path of seeing and the result of non-returner. Then in their next life they will proceed to, i.e. take rebirth in the Form Realm.

Non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm can again be categorized into five types:

- I) Non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm and go beyond (i.e. attain self-liberation) in the intermediate state
- II) Non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm and go beyond (i.e. attain self-liberation) in the birth state
- III) Non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm and go beyond (i.e. attain self-liberation) with a compositional factor
- IV) Non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm and go beyond (i.e. attain self-liberation) without a compositional factor
- V) Non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm and progress to a higher [level]

I) Non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm and go beyond (i.e. attain self-liberation) in the intermediate state

Non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm and go beyond (i.e. attain self-liberation) in the intermediate state (*gzugs su nyer 'gro phyir mi 'ong bar 'da' ba*) are non-returners of the Desire Realm who in this life newly attained the path of seeing and the result of non-returner. Then after their death, they will proceed to the intermediate state of one of the four levels of the Form Realm and attain the result of foe-destroyer in that intermediate state.

Non-returners who will proceed to the Form Realm and go beyond in the intermediate state will become foe-destroyers in the *intermediate state* of the Form Realm without subsequently being born in the Form Realm itself because, preceding their death in this life, their eighth link of craving and ninth link of grasping lack the potential to empower the (previously accumulated) propelling karma in such a way that the latter is able to project these non-returners into both the intermediate state and rebirth in the Form Realm. Instead, their craving and grasping can merely enable the propelling karma to project the non-returners into the intermediate state of the Form Realm.

Then, as intermediate state beings, they will be able to generate the ninth supramundane uninterrupted path of the path of meditation, i.e. the *Vajra-like Stabilization*, eliminate the subtlest innate afflictions of the three realms, and become foe-destroyers.

In general, there are four states of existence:

1. The intermediate state
2. The birth state
3. The preceding state
4. The death state

1. The intermediate state

In order to be born in either the Desire or Form Realm, it is necessary to pass through an intermediate state (*bar do'i srid pa/bar srid*). But there is no intermediate state that precedes rebirth in a Formless Realm.

This is because the four aggregates of the being of the formless realm (feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness) are achieved immediately after the death of the former life.

An intermediate state being has five characteristics:

- A. It has all five sense powers
- B. Since it is born spontaneously, all the parts of its body are simultaneously completed.
- C. Since it has a subtle body, it cannot be destroyed, even by a powerful weapon
- D. Except for birthplaces, such as the mother's womb, it is not obstructed even by mountains, fences, and so forth
- E. Through the force of karmic powers, it can go wherever it wants instantaneously and not even a Buddha can stop it.

The being of the intermediate state rushes about seeking a birthplace and seeking smells for nourishment. Since it feeds on smells it is called 'smell-eater' (Skt.: *gandharva*, Tib.: *dri za*) According to the Buddhist Tantric system, having a very subtle mental body attained in dependence on energy wind alone, and having abandoned the coarse body of the constituents with heavy and gross flesh, blood, bones, and so forth, the intermediate state being is also called 'basic Sambhogakaya' (basic Enjoyment Body) since it is the basis of purification to be transformed into a Sambhogakaya. The longest intermediate state is seven days. However, there is no certainty, since there are cases of transmigrating to the next birth immediately upon achieving the intermediate state when the causes for rebirth come together.

If the causes of birth do not come together within seven days, a small death occurs at the end of the seventh day, whereupon another intermediate state is achieved. In his *Actuality of the Levels* (*Bhumivastu*) Asanga says that, when seven weeks have passed in that manner, the causes for rebirth definitely come together and a rebirth is necessarily taken.

Asanga also explains that even when an intermediate being sees its former physical body, owing to the force of having severed any relationship with that body, it does not think, 'My body', and does not generate a wish to enter it.

The *Sutra of Teaching to Nanda on Entry to the Womb* (*Ayushmannandagarbhavakrantinirdesha*) explains that the color of the body of an intermediate state being who will take birth in the hell realm looks like a log burned by fire; in the preta realm, like fire; in the animal realm, like smoke; in the human and celestial realm of the desire realm, like gold; and in the form realm, white.

Furthermore, it is said that depending on the rebirth one will take, in the intermediate state one's body has the shape of the being of the next rebirth. In the case of someone who will take rebirth, for instance, as an animal, in the intermediate state the being has a body of energy wind with the shape of the animal of the next life.

Vasubhandu's *Treasury of Knowledge* (*Abhidharmakosha*) explains that intermediate state beings are seen by others of similar type and by those with clairvoyance attained through meditation. It also says that beings of the intermediate state of higher type perceive lower ones.

2. The birth state

The birth state (*skye srid*) refers to the initial state after taking rebirth in one of the nine levels of the three realms. In the case of a human being, it starts at the time of conception (when the mental consciousness of the intermediate state being has newly entered the fertilized egg in the mother's womb) and lasts as long as the five sense powers are not fully developed. Of the twelve links, it pertains to the fourth link, the link of name and form. The first moment of the fifth link, the link of the five sense spheres, marks the first moment of the *preceding state*, which is the third state of existence.

In his *Treasury of Knowledge* (*Abhidharmakosha*) Vasubhandu says that the *birth state* is an afflicted state. However, according to Vasubhandu's *Auto-commentary on the Treasury of Knowledge* only the first moment of the *birth state* is afflicted because upon conception, samsaric beings usually generate one of the afflictions, such as anger, attachment, etc.

3. The preceding state

The preceding state (*sngon dus kyi srid pa*) refers to the state of existence between rebirth and death, and is usually the longest of the four states. It is called 'preceding state' because it precedes the death state.

As mentioned above, the first moment of the fifth, the link of the five sense spheres marks the first moment of the preceding state, during which the five sense spheres, i.e. the five sense powers fully function and are thus able to serve as the uncommon empowering conditions of their respective sense consciousnesses. Once the five sense powers fully function, the eye sense power is able to induce an eye consciousness upon shape and color appearing to the eye, the ear sense power is able to induce an ear consciousness upon sound appearing to the ear, and so forth.

The preceding state ends when the death state arises.

4. The death state

There are two types of death state (*'chi srid*): a coarse and subtle death state. The coarse death state